DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 213 428 IR 010 059

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TITLE Focus on State Libraries. A Report to the Nation.
INSTITUTION Australian Library Promotion Council, Melbourne.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-90S739-17-X
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 33p.
AVAILABLE FROM Australian Library Promotion Council, 328 Swanston St., Melbourne, Victoria 3000 ($1.75 plus postage).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Depository Libraries; *Financial Needs; Foreign Countries; History; *Information Centers; Information Services; Library Cooperation; Library Networks; Library Personnel; *Library Role; Resource Centers; *State Libraries; Statewide Planning
IDENTIFIERS *Australia

ABSTRACT

This report discusses the importance of state libraries to the system of Australian library resources and outlines the relevance of state library resources to the present and future information needs of the Australian community. The nature and function of state libraries are reviewed and placed in a historical context. An outline of the challenges facing Australian state libraries as they attempt to define and adapt to their future during the 1980s is followed by discussions of state libraries as resource centers for primary historial materials, as depository centers for state publications, as providers of support services to smaller libraries, as information resources for government officials, as information for the statewide community, and as centers for statewide library networks. The role of the state library in statewide planning is described and the present needs of state libraries with respect to the purchase of materials, the maintenance of professional staff, and physical accommodations are reviewed. A brief analysis of the role of state libraries in conserving the materials they house is also included. (JL)

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FOCUS ON STATE LIBRARIES

A REPORT TO THE NATION

Denis Richardson

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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AUSTRALIAN LIBRARY PROMOTION COUNCIL
1980

IR010059

REPORT TO THE NATION SERIES

1 Margaret Trask. *School libraries*, 1968. 50c.
2 John D. McLaren. *Libraries for the public*, 1969 (out of print)
3 David Cohen. *Primary school libraries*, 1972 (out of print)
4 Des Pickering and Helen Modra. *Library services to the disadvantaged*, 1973. $1.00
5 Margaret Trask. *Library Service and the Community*, 1974. $1.50 (out of print).
6 Allan Horton. *Libraries are great mate! But they could be greater*, 1976. $1.00
7 Judith Goyen. *Libraries for literacy*, 1978. $1.50
8 Denis Richardson. *Focus on State Libraries*, 1980. $1.75

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First published 1980

ISBN 0 909739 17 X

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Copies of this publication can be obtained at $1.75 per copy plus 50¢ postage, from Australian Library Promotion Council, 328 Swanston St., Melbourne, Vic. 3000.

Printed by Impact Printing Pty Ltd, 394 Victoria Street Brunswick 3056

INTRODUCTION

The Australian Library Promotion Council has identified as the focus for its energies in 1980 the problems and needs of our State Libraries.

When I undertook to prepare the REPORT TO THE NATION on this theme I had visualised an introductory chapter which I would write, followed by a statement on each of the State Libraries. It soon became apparent that such a format would be repetitive and boring. What follows is therefore essentially a personal statement which has leant heavily on the support of various senior colleagues in the different States. The specific opinions expressed are not those of any institution with which I or my colleagues are associated. To the best of my knowledge the facts reported are correct.

Essentially what I have sought to express is

- that because our State Libraries
  - are of major importance in the system of Australian library resources

    and
  - are still highly relevant to the present and future needs of the Australian community

    they
  - are in **need of better funding** for maintenance and development of their collections
  - are in **need of adequate staffs** to provide present services and develop new services to meet community needs
  - are in **need of adequate accommodation**

    and
  - have major problems associated with the physical conservation of their collections.

Recognition of these needs demands **public action to ensure that adequate financial resources are made available now and in the future** to sustain these institutions and to enable them to perform their central role in the pattern of Australian library services.

W.D. RICHARDSON

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WHAT IS THE STATE LIBRARY?

WHERE is your State Library?

WHAT does your State Library do for you?

Whilst the average man or woman in the street could probably answer the first question, although perhaps with some difficulty, it is doubtful whether the average Australian has a clear understanding of the work of their State Library, and even less understanding of what it can and does do for them, directly or indirectly.

The last thirty years have seen a great expansion in the provision of libraries of one type or another in Australia. As a result Australians are far more aware of the existence and role of libraries in serving the people of Australia whether at school or university or generally through their local public libraries. The establishment of libraries of varying degrees of adequacy in our schools and in the newly established colleges and universities, and the gradual progress towards near universal provision of community-based library services represents a recognition by governments and the community which elects them and provides funds for their programmes, that modern society needs libraries and the resources and services which they provide.

The earliest and strongest manifestation of library service in Australia was through the institutions which we now know as State Libraries. As we enter the 1980s they have become the area of library service most in need of public understanding and support if they are to continue to fulfill an effective role into the next century. Given the differing nature of the history of our separate states, it is scarcely surprising to find that the State Libraries were not cast from a single mould. Depending where one lives, the State Libraries may today present to the residents of our state capitals a widely varying physical image. In the youngest states this image will range from comparatively modern buildings to a hole in the ground from which will shortly arise a modern complex to replace the previously unfinished pre-1914 building and a variety of other *ad hoc* premises. In the two largest metropolitan centres the State Library buildings, although both built in the present century, sit with all the style and self-confidence of the great Victorian institutions which they were. The State Library of New South Wales, once described as the British Museum of the southern hemisphere, sits proudly behind the classical portico which seems the ap-

propriate entry to a temple of learning. The State Library of Victoria shares with two museums, a building of high Victorian style, in the centre of which sits a conscious replica of the great reading room of the British Museum and built on the same grand scale.

To some degree, all our State Libraries are products of the Victorian era and its belief in the relevance of large public reference libraries to the needs of society. Society has evolved greatly since the last century, and not least in the explosive growth in recorded knowledge, and in society's needs for information, education and the products of research. The printed book, although no longer the sole repository of man's knowledge and experience, still remains the primary carrier of information, and vastly increased numbers are published today compared to a century ago. However, we live in a world of new technologies. We have all become conscious of the impact of the silicon chip and microprocessor technologies on our daily lives and particularly on our daily work. Libraries live in the modern world. They increasingly utilise computing and communication technologies to provide the resources and services needed by society. Where do State Libraries stand today in relation to the communities they serve?

The object of this *Report to the Nation* is to restate the relevance of the State Libraries to the information needs of Australian society in the 1980s and beyond, and to identify the needs of State Libraries for public support, **particularly in funding**, if they are to adequately perform the roles and functions which Australian society in the future will properly expect of them.

HISTORICAL RETROSPECT

It is immaterial whether we date the origins of the State Libraries from the opening in 1856 of the Melbourne Public Library — Australia's first free public library — or from the establishment in 1826 of the Australian Subscription Library which was bought in 1869 by the New South Wales government to form the basis of the present State Library. Established by the individual colonies as a form of national library for the colony, in their early years, particularly in New South Wales and Victoria, they were envisaged as libraries of this type with a strong emphasis on building what we would today characterise as research collections.

In 1934 when Ralph Munn and E.R. Pitt carried out their historic survey of Australian libraries, they commented that the State Libraries had been described as the backbone of the Australian library system and also as the institutions which have kept the system from developing a backbone. They believed there was an element of truth in both appraisals. Probably one of the most frequently quoted comments from the Report was that

> 'Anyone wishing to carry away a favourable impression of the Public Library of Queensland should never make the mistake of entering it.'

Nevertheless the State Libraries as a group represented the strongest element in the nation's library resources. The long term effects of savage economic cuts during the depression years had not yet become evident. The Public Library of Victoria which had been Australia's leading library until this time, with its unrivalled collections of early printed material and the country's largest collection of books of permanent cultural value, had not yet lost its pre-eminence. The Public Library of New South Wales — frequently confused in the public mind as the Mitchell Library — had built the wings of its present building to house its unrivalled collections of Australiana based on the bequests of David Scott Mitchell and Sir William Dixson. Although these two were the outstanding State Library collections, the total combined collections of all State Libraries were more than double those of the university libraries of the day.

Forty years later the picture had changed significantly. As a national research resource the State Libraries by 1974 appeared to have been significantly overtaken by the development of university libraries which with a total of 7.5 million volumes were now more than double the collections of the State Libraries. Other significant research resources had emerged with the building of the National Library collections and the development of a complex of scientific libraries to serve C.S.I.R.O.

During the same period significant growth had taken place in the provision of public library services and the different legal and administrative structures which evolved in the various states all had important, if differing, impacts on the development of the State Libraries themselves. The Munn-Pitt Report had recommended the establishment in the capital cities of combined state/municipal

libraries. This pattern, which would have reflected the combined reference and lending services of the great city services in Britain and North America, was not adopted in Australia. Instead, local municipal, rate-supported services have evolved with the financial support of state government, administered by State Library Boards. In some cases Library Boards were established quite independently of the State Library. In all states however there has ultimately been a combining of Library Board and State Library in a single administrative structure. As a result the resources and services of the original State Library have been marshalled to support municipal level services, whether in the suburbs or in rural centres, as well as provide direct services to the public through its central city building.

One result of this pattern of development is the confusion which often arises in the public mind between on the one hand, services given at the community level either directly by the State Library Board or indirectly in support services to a local authority library, and on the other hand, the role and function of the State Reference Library, as the former State Library may now be known. We are concerned here primarily with the problems facing the former State Libraries, by whatever designation they are now known. In some states their activities are an integral part of a statewide library service. In others they are still recognisably the old State Libraries. All, however, face common problems in the future and all need far better financial support than they receive today.

THE EMERGING PROBLEM

Although there has been significant development of library services of all types in Australia since World War II, it has become increasingly apparent to library administrators during the 1970s that the growing demand for library and information services in a modern society requires a greater allocation of resources than is currently available to the various types of libraries in Australia. As finance is fundamental to the development of adequate resources and services there is clearly a need to persuade society at large, and governments in particular, to review the relative allocation of resources devoted to the provision of library and information services. In some areas there has been some improvement in the provision made, though by the end of the 1970s it is by no means

certain that the improvements made earlier in the decade are being sustained.

In the area of provision of library services for the general public, there has been continued pressure for improvement both in services provided by municipal authorities and those provided directly by the state governments through the State Library and indirectly through the support of local services by financial subsidy or the provision of direct support services. In 1972 AACOBS[1] in a statement *The pattern of library services in Australia* commented that all of the State Reference Libraries were inadequately financed. Indeed they were all comparatively more adequately financed at the turn of the century.

> 'They have to face an extraordinary proliferation of new subject fields (some of vital importance) and a great increase in the volume of publication of recorded information in monographs and serials. These, together with the emergence of the newer media, the rapid growth of population, the generally higher level of education in the community, the growth of technology and the greater sophistication of business and public services, have all increased the pressures on the services of State Reference Libraries. None is sufficiently endowed to meet the demands quite properly made on it, and none is able to meet the demands of the community for information resources in considerable depth.'
>
> [The pattern of library services in Australia — page 21]

At this period AACOBS on several occasions sought the financial support of the Federal government for public library services but without success. In March 1975 the then Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam announced the establishment of the Committee of Inquiry into Public Libraries. Its terms of reference included *inter alia*

— to inquire into and report upon the current role and

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1 Australian Advisory Council on Bibliography Services. Established in 1956, AACOBS has been described as the parliament of Australian libraries. All types of library are represented on the Council. Originally concerned with bibliography and bibliographical services, it is now involved in all aspects of library and information services.

effectiveness of **State** regional and municipal libraries . . .

— to report upon the desirable future roles for, and development of **State** regional and municipal library services.

The Report of the Committee (the Horton Report) although principally concerned with public libraries in the sense of local public libraries for the community, did nevertheless consider State public libraries and their problems. The Report noted that the total resources of the State Libraries now totalled some five-and-a-half million volumes and while

> 'they vary greatly in size and in depth of collections, the State Libraries provide the richest source of educational, recreational and informational material available freely to the public directly or through a public library. By their major collecting activities, the State Libraries have aspired to provide an important source of current and restrospective material to aid scholarship. Though their collections inevitably reflect some specialisation, and their growth has been impeded by such external factors as financial depression or changing priorities, all have attempted within their resources to develop broad collections, including specialised material, and to preserve material irrespective of the level of current demand to provide for research and support for other libraries which maintain current collections only. This latter aspect, the provision of supplementary resources, together with the provision of support services to municipal libraries, is becoming an increasing concern of the State Libraries.
>
> [Horton Report, paragraph 2.14]

In its recommendation the Committee made no specific proposals for the State Reference Libraries as such although it referred extensively to the planning and development role of the State Library Authority. The general recommendations of the Report have now been with Government for four years without result, although the first tentative steps towards a national planning body for library and information services may follow from a meeting of State and Federal ministers late in 1979. It is clear however that the

Federal government does not intend to flow substantial funding for public libraries to either state or municipal levels of government.

One specific comment of the Horton Report concerned the totally inadequate accommodation available to the State Libraries of Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia. It would seem *prima facie* that this particular problem has been resolved as new State Libraries are currently under construction in Perth and in the preliminary design stage in Brisbane and Melbourne. Whether or not these projects will meet the long term needs of these institutions for mass storage, the situation in the other states is still unsatisfactory despite comparatively modern buildings. Libraries, however, are not bricks and mortar. As institutions they represent the effective interaction of

— adequate and appropriate resources of library materials

— adequate numbers of appropriately qualified staff

— buildings which are effective by virtue of their location and design.

As all libraries enter the 1980s, it is the funding problems associated with the first two which are causing the greatest difficulties to library administrators. Books and other library materials have steadily increased in cost in recent years at rates far above the general inflationary rate in Australia. In service institutions such as libraries the relative cost of staff slowly but constantly increases, and demands for new or more advanced services lead to demands for additional and better qualified staff. In an economy which is seeking to contain rising costs and to transfer the balance of resource allocation away from the public sector, libraries are ill-placed to secure a better share of the available resources.

In selecting the State Libraries of Australia as its target for its opening campaign of the 1980s, the Australian Library Promotion Council is seeking to bring squarely before the public and the governments which it elects, the needs of these major institutions for better resource allocation, i.e. better book votes, more adequate finance for staff, recognition that they are not an historic relic of the Victorian era but an essential ingredient in a democratic society where

'Access to books, and other resource material and to

other information sources is necessary for continuing vocational and recurrent education, desirable for personal development and critical for an informed democracy.'

[Horton Report, paragraph 4.2]

In seeking to focus the attention of Australia on our State Libraries it is essential that we do so in the context of the future, not of the past. As we have noted, the State Libraries sought to be self-sufficient. In the context of communications in past times they had little option, and with adequate funds they were able to cope with the flow of new publications and information. Recently we have seen many changes in the technological and economic environments. Libraries increasingly look to one another for mutual support in order to optimise scarce resources and provide as economically as possible the services the community has a right to expect. Looking forward into the 1980s we must first define our library resource requirements in the context of future roles and objectives and the needs of society for library and information services.

DEFINING THE FUTURE

There is no single view on how the State Libraries will react to the challenge of the 1980s. This is not surprising given the differing historic backgrounds and the marked difference in responsibilities for support or administration of direct service to the public at the local community level. The pattern differs in each state but with the differences most clearly marked between New South Wales and Victoria on the one hand and Tasmania on the other. In the former case the State Library most strongly reflects its origins as the national library of an emerging colony. In the latter case the State Library as an institution, has administrative responsibility for all public libraries throughout Tasmania. The State Library building in Hobart represents the administrative headquarters of the state-wide system and the location of its principal reference resources and special collections and services. Similar to the Tasmanian model is the Library Board of Western Australia which in the past 28 years has built by joint enterprise with local authorities, a network of community library services and has absorbed the former Public Library of Western Australia as the State Reference

Library and State Bibliographical Centre[2] providing direct support to the local services.

It is easier to separate and define the function of the State Library in states such as New South Wales and Victoria where it has remained the principal functional activity of the State Library Authority. In other states where support is given to local services by the direct provision and/or processing of local bookstocks, or where as in the case of Tasmania, the local services are directly provided by the State Library Authority, the State Library as viewed by the man in the street is but one arm of a statewide library operation. Inevitably, in these states the function of the State Library is more directly influenced by the pattern of library service for the state as a whole, and the resources available to the State Reference Library have to be determined within the context of the total operation.

In the New South Wales/Victoria pattern the resources available to the State Library, whilst flowing from the state seem nevertheless to flow in a separate, although parallel channel from the financial support for local public libraries which the State Library administers. Improvement in the latter does not necessarily accompany improvement in the former. This can be clearly seen in recent years in Victoria. The State Government there has in general maintained its support of local library services through subsidy, but it has not maintained the real value of the support given to the State Library.

A number of states have reviewed their structure of library services in recent years. Thus, in New South Wales, following amalgamation of the former Library Board and Council of the State Library in 1975 to form the Library Council of New South Wales in 1975 a draft state plan for the development of **public** libraries was formulated and has since been under wide discussion. In South Australia the report of the Crawford Committee has resulted in the

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2 The State Bibliographical Centre in Western Australia has been described as the heart of the library system of the whole of Western Australia. It acts as a state agency to provide a request and information service to all types of library and facilitates inter-library lending in the state-wide network of 168 public libraries, four extension services and over 200 other libraries. To support this work the Centre maintains a large collection of bibliographies and indexes and is also responsible for the state's Union Catalogue of Serials and the State Outlier Union Catalogue of Monographs.

creation of a separate Public Libraries Division. Most recently, in Tasmania, the Cartland Report has recommended that the State Library Authority assume total financial responsibility for library services at the local government level. It is perhaps not surprising in view of the findings and recommendations of the Horton Report that the primary concern has been with the development of better library services for the public.

It must be a matter for concern that the same pressures have not been exerted by library administrators or the public at large to adequately develop the resources and services of our state reference libraries to meet the total needs of the community. How do the states themselves see their State Libraries today and in the future?

The most recent statement is contained in the Cartland Report which described the Tasmanian State Reference Library as serving

> 'the state as the major source of reference and information. It supports the regional reference services and backs up many other libraries outside the State system. It is the first point of enquiry for a very wide variety of individuals and organisations and is recognised as serving a special role in providing information to small business and industry.'
>
> [Cartland Report, paragraph 5.2]

It is also the state's major link with the Australian library network. This last role is also seen to be important in Western Australia where the development of the State Reference Library and the State Bibliographical Centre as co-ordinating and channelling agents to emerging national systems is seen as a major emphasis in objectives for the 1980s. The concern of the most isolated states to develop effective linkages with the resources available elsewhere in Australia is understandable. It is significant, however, that in all states the old emphasis on self sufficiency and independence and a refusal to allow material to leave the State Library building under any circumstances has been replaced by attitudes of co-operation and mutual resource sharing. Whilst no library will normally lend rare or unique material, it is now the more general policy that material in the general reference collections should be available to support the needs of readers in other libraries either within the state of elsewhere.

We can see the impact of this changed attitude on the State Library

of New South Wales, which has the longest unbroken history of any of the State Libraries and was for long a library where one came to read, not one which lent its books elsewhere or provided services other than on its own premises. In the 1960s it defined its role as follows:

> To serve the community as a major source of recorded knowledge for reference, advanced study and research;
>
> To supplement the resources of other libraries in New South Wales;
>
> To co-operate with other libraries towards the best use of the library resources of Australia.

It seeks to fulfill these functions within the limits of funds, staff and accommodation by

> — maintaining a General Reference Library, comprehensive in scope and with special strengths in some specified fields of knowledge;
>
> — preserving as exhaustively as possible in the research collections of the Mitchell Library and the Dixson Libraries and Galleries, the documentary record of the Australasian-Pacific region; and by
>
> — providing through an Extension Service a supplementary reference service for municipal and shire public libraries and a library service for country residents not served by a public library.

The Library now believes the problem for the 1980s is not to redefine these objectives but to secure adequate means to attain these objectives. It recognises however that there is a tightrope to be walked. On the one hand the research collections, both Australian and non-Australian, must be maintained as major sources of material for advanced study for the continuing use of scholars and others. On the other, the role of the State Library in providing supplementary resources for other libraries must be pursued actively and effectively. Since the needs of other libraries and their users are extraordinarily wide and varied, whole new policies of access to the collections of the State Library have been developed. The general philosophy is that there must be many access points to the information resources of the Library, in addition to the direct use of the building in Macquarie Street, Sydney. Most numerous

among these access points are, of course, the local public libraries. By 1980 almost all of the books in the General Reference Library which could not reasonably be obtained elsewhere were available for loan to public and other libraries. The materials in the Mitchell Library and in the Dixson Library, however, cannot be lent because of the terms of their bequest.

THE STATE LIBRARY AS A RESOURCE CENTRE

We have already remarked on the confusion in the public mind between the Mitchell Library and the State Library of New South Wales. The famous collection of David Scott Mitchell has always brought, and deservedly so, a reputation to the State Library as a major scholarly library. In evaluating State Libraries as resource centres in the future we must consider their contribution to the national network of research facilities and the State Library of New South Wales is a good starting point. It consists fundamentally of its two great research collections, the General Reference Library and the Mitchell Library. The first is particularly strong in technology, biography, history, government publications, and periodical material generally. The second, as is well known, is the pre-eminent collection of documentary material on Australasia and the Pacific. Notable among the Australian materials are pictorial items of all kinds, from large oil paintings to photographic negatives.

It is unthinkable that the State Library of New South Wales could ever relinquish its role as a centre for primary research, and fortunately no one from either government or the private sector, is likely to expect that it should do so. The only point at issue is likely to be the extent of support in the future from each of these sectors.

But it is precisely this problem of adequate funding to continue to sustain the strength of the basic collections in our State Libraries which must give concern as we look forward in the 1980s. The State Library of New South Wales has been in the past well funded to meet its objectives. It no longer believes this to be the case.

The total amount available in 1980 for the acquisition of library materials is less than three quarters of a million dollars of which by far the greater part is from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the State: almost the whole of the income from trust funds relates to the

Australian collections. This total is demonstrably inadequate to maintain acquisitions at the current rate, let alone to make any provision for new subject fields or for the purchase of particular items of rarity and high cost. Whereas once the Library could say with reasonable certainty that it had the financial resources to buy whatever it needed to buy, now the utmost attention is given to the scrutiny of intended purchase orders and many must be rejected on the grounds of cost.

For some years the statutory annual endowment for the purchase of library materials, although regularly increased, has not kept step with the general inflation figure, let alone the more steeply rising costs of library materials. In 1980, for the first time since the Great Depression of the 1930s, periodical subscriptions are being cancelled. Since one of the great strengths of the General Reference Library is in its long serial runs, cancellations are the seeds of future disaster. So far no periodical title unique to New South Wales has been cancelled, but one cannot be overly sanguine.

Its great sister institution in Melbourne has been served less generously for many years and has probably never recovered from the impact of the Depression years. Depression to many Australians is either a distant memory or something to be read about in history books. For librarians in some of our well known libraries it is a recurring gap in collections where the effect of financial cuts can be seen to this day. In South Australia fifty years later it is still estimated that $500,000 is required to make good the losses of that period.

The State Libraries believe they have a role in the future to support research. They will clearly do this in the context of the research resources which have been built in the libraries of other institutions. At the same time they must remain conscious of their responsibility to serve the general public at large, for many of whom the only means of access to the resources of tertiary or other libraries is through their public library whether at the state or local level. The concept of resource sharing is now widely promoted between major libraries. Inherent in it is the acceptance by each library of some measure of responsibility for certain elements in the total map of resources required to serve the public. If no library today can hope to be self sufficient neither can any library hope to secure all its needs from other sources and the State Libraries recognise that they must maintain their own contribution to the

national system and seek the necessary funds to ensure that they contribute in a manner appropriate to the level of their responsibilities. Thus the State Library of Western Australia sees as one of the objectives of the 1980s the development in the State Reference Library of fields in which it has a chance of achieving excellence, and emphasis on the special nature of some of its collections and services.

Current pressures on other research libraries, particularly in the universities, only serve to highlight the need for the State Libraries to be able to fulfill their proper obligations to society. They cannot abdicate their role to other institutions which do not have as a primary obligation the provision of resources and services for the general public.

THE STATE LIBRARY AS A CENTRE OF UNIQUE RESOURCE

The State Libraries are often referred to as libraries of last resort within their state. This reflects the old concept of the national library for the colony and they prefer to think of themselves as rather **higher level** resources supporting other libraries within the state. There is, however, one area of the responsibilities of the State Libraries in which they do act as libraries of last resort and that is as libraries of legal deposit[3] for material published within the state. The importance of this particular responsibility has varied in the past with the vitality of local publishing within a state. We have been so accustomed to seeking a major part of our library resources from overseas that it is often forgotten that Australian publishing has now come of age, and the need for specific deposit collections guaranteed and preserved for posterity is a growing rather than diminishing responsibility. Granted that the National Library of Australia maintains such a collection on a national basis nevertheless we cannot, as a nation, depend on a single deposit collection of our national published output nor can we guarantee that a single

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3 Legal deposit.
Any book published anywhere in Australia must be deposited in the National Library under the provisions of the federal Copyright Act. State Libraries receive a copy of any book published within the boundaries of their state either under state Copyright Act, or under the Library's own legislation.

institution will successfully acquire everything appearing in each state. It is not only the typical book sold across the bookshop counter which concerns us, but the many publications appearing locally in small numbers which yet reflect so many aspects of our national culture.

The problem is highlighted by a comment from the J.S. Battye Library of Western Australian History which believes it fulfills its role as the legal deposit library of the state with commendable vigour. Published material, though often fugitive, can usually be traced eventually. In the field of the 'semi-published' document however, problems are greater. An environmental impact statement, for instance, may be produced in as few as twenty copies, and the attitude of the parties to its production, when questions of preservation of copies in a State Library are raised, may vary from studied indifference to sheer hostility. Yet it is important for posterity that such documents be preserved. In this area of its work the Battye Library has much to gain from the fact that it is also the State Archives, and has a statutory responsibility to collect official, non-current, records of the state.

Although all State Libraries do not have responsibility for the public records of their state, some do, and this is a substantial administrative and accommodation responsibility. In addition all State Libraries do have a major responsibility for the collection and preservation of private manuscript records concerning their state. Although libraries have long been active in this field and have acquired substantial collections of material, the Australian public is now becoming generally much more aware of its national historic heritage, and will seek to preserve and access the records of that past on an increasing scale. Both preservation and access present substantial responsibilities to the State Libraries and it is doubtful if any are adequately provided to meet these responsibilities.

Few of us when writing a letter or even maintaining a diary, think of posterity in deciding the type of paper to write on. In consequence the vast majority of the contents of our modern archives are written on material which is chemically dirty and will deteriorate rapidly unless correctly cared for in buildings with appropriate climatic control. State Libraries are therefore concerned to have sufficient accommodation to house and preserve our archives in proper conditions — and our archives will inevitably continue to grow as we grow older as a nation. We also need to be able to make

copies of those parts of the archive which are likely to be heavily used by succeeding generations — either by publishing them for general distribution, or by microfilming to provide an alternative working copy within the Library and so ensure the preservation of the original. Both types of programme require appropriate funding support if they are to make serious impact on the problem.

In addition, the long term preservation of the archive requires investment in adequate scientific conservation facilities on a scale as yet unprovided anywhere in Australia. Australia lacks adequate human resources to properly care for its historic artefacts of all types, and despite repeated surveys which have identified the need and scale of resources required, governments have done little to attack the problem. Perhaps they believe that if they wait long enough the problem will go away — and in a sense they are correct, for if we leave our archives long enough to the gentle hand of nature they will physically disintegrate beyond recall. It is doubtful, however, that this is the solution the Australian public at large would seek.

Access is a second obligation presenting significant resource problems to our libraries. Not only do the necessary physical facilities have to be provided to enable research workers to work on unique material of this type, but in addition the collections themselves have to be organised and maintained in order that users can identify the existence of documentary material relevant to their needs. The inevitable growth in our archives combined with the difficulty facing libraries in adequately funding the number of staff required to meet all their obligations presents a continuing problem to library administrators, but unfortunately it is one to which it is all too easy to give second priority whilst more vocal demands are met.

Not everyone leaves a written record of his life but we have come to realise that many people can contribute to the record and understanding of our past if their thoughts and memories can be recorded for posterity. Various activities have been in progress in recent years to record, before it is too late, many of those who have contributed to the emergence of Australia's national identity. State Libraries have a positive role in this area but all too often lack adequate resources. It is an area where work cannot be left until tomorrow — by then it may be too late. It is also an area likely to become of increasing importance. Modern generations do not write

and preserve letters in the way of the past, nor do they keep diaries. Despite the superabundance of paper in modern society, the personal record may well be more transitory than in the past and we will need more rather than fewer recording programmes to catch the spirit of the time.

THE STATE LIBRARY AS A CENTRE OF SPECIAL RESOURCES

If the State Library has a major role to provide support services to other libraries and through them to their users, it is self evident that where the State Library holds unique resources it is fulfilling a major support service role. It is equally true in the case of types of material which are of a nature which makes it difficult for a local library to maintain at the local level a collection which is in any way adequate to meet the demands of the local community. Some states have developed special agencies to meet the need for services in areas such as film. In others the State Library provides services — thus the State Library of New South Wales operates the State Film Library, and the State Library of Western Australia also operates the Central Music Library. The provision of services such as these requires staff with special skills and appropriate accommodation to cope with the needs of the particular types of material. Such services also require particular recognition by the appropriate funding authorities to ensure that they are recognised as an additional responsibility beyond the more conventional book oriented resources with which state treasuries are familiar. Thus in Tasmania neither the Film Library nor the music collection can be regarded as adequate and both require a considerably greater annual investment than they receive at the present time.

Changes in the nature of Australian society on the one hand, and in society's perceptions of its obligations to particular sectors of the community on the other have led to developing responsibilities by the State Libraries to provide support resources to the community. The growing multicultural nature of our society presents considerable difficulties to many library services. Whilst a local community library can and should make provision for major ethnic groups within its area, a library with 40 language groups to sustain — as is the case with one Melbourne metropolitan library service — must turn to the State Library for assistance, either by the provision

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Libraries house more than books and require special facilities – the map room lodges in the main reading room

of sustaining collections, or by central assistance in purchasing and processing materials in non-English language areas. Provision of such services by the State Library requires staff with specific language skills and the provision of special bulk loan collections. The need for these services is likely to grow as Australia increasingly recognises and seeks to sustain its multicultural heritage. It is an area where the available human and financial resources are already recognised as inadequate in some states and it is doubtful if any state could claim their services were on a scale which recognised the ethnic make-up of our population.

Similarly there is now increasing recognition of the special library needs of the disabled. This also is an area where community libraries require the support of central services and resources. The special requirements to sustain such services on a state-wide basis must receive appropriate priority in the allocation of funding and staff resources.

THE STATE LIBRARY AS A RESOURCE FOR THE GOVERNMENT

The State Library is for the people but in a democracy the government is the people. It is essential to the well being of that democracy that government be well informed both in its parliamentary function and its administrative bureaucracy. The parliaments of the states each have their own library services and the departments of government similarly. It must be recognised that the State Library is as much a support resource to the work of the parliamentary library and those serving government departments, as it is a resource for the public at large. If the State Library is unable to acquire adequate resources and provide appropriate support services, it is the government administration of the day which is the worse off as much as the man in the street. It may not be readily apparent, for organisations as well as individuals find difficulty in identifying their needs for information and will frequently be unaware of the results of deprivation. That is not to say that institutions will not be more effective when information is available when needed.

THE STATE LIBRARY AS AN INFORMATION CENTRE

To the average Australian libraries = books. The image is a passive one of collections of material. Today however increasingly libraries = information, and the image is an active one of services reaching out to serve the wide-ranging needs of society for information. State Libraries have been described as information power houses. They certainly have this potential, but to fulfill it they need to be adequately fuelled. We have already examined their need for adequate collections. These collections cannot be mobilised to meet the needs of users without qualified staff and appropriate services. The librarian of today is a skilled professional and seeks the same rewards as other trained people in our society. State Libraries must be able to recruit and reward the best of these in order to provide the services necessary for society at large.

The range of information likely to be sought by a state-wide community is enormous. It can never be possible for a State Library to respond to every demand. Some will be initially placed on local public libraries and if they are unable to meet the demand they will turn to their State Library for support. Other demands will come direct to the State Library which must have staff resources to provide adequate direct public services. Our information needs change greatly as we proceed through life. They also vary widely between our needs for our public life at work, and our private life as an individual in society. They can be complex or simple but simple needs may become complex demands on a system. A simple need to identify one's rights *vis-a-vis* government on some issue can require specialised knowledge of the mountain of documentation which governments issue.

The ability to identify and locate the correct information resource to meet the needs of a user now includes the ability to directly search international sources of information through computer based systems which can be accessed from Australia. It is the ability to provide to the man in the street the information which he can reasonably expect to secure in order to live and work in modern society, which makes the State Library perhaps more relevant to the daily life of the average Australian than it has ever before. For this reason alone we must **all** be concerned with the health and vitality of these institutions.

THE STATE LIBRARY AS A NETWORK CENTRE

We have already noted that the self-sufficient stand-alone library is a thing of the past. Libraries seek increasingly to assist one another and share their resources. These developments have been facilitated by advances in recent decades in computing and communications technologies. It seems clear that further technological innovation, particularly in areas such as facsimile transmission, will significantly affect the capacity of libraries to access resources to meet the needs of their own users. State Libraries have a key role to play. In New South Wales communications developments are seen as particularly significant.

In the future the State Library will be both a resource which can be tapped by communications technology and a switching centre which will refer requests to other appropriate agencies. Formal networks now being established will be significant in this. In the long run it may be the catalogue-based networks which are of the greatest importance, because they will enable collection resource sharing, but participation in information retrieval networks is also seen to be of great advantage. In Western Australia the State Library organisation in Perth already serves as a network centre, in a manner which they believe to be as thoroughgoing as that of any other Australian State Library, with the possible exception of Tasmania. The union catalogues and inter-library loan services are centred on the State Bibliographical Centre, and the stock of the State Reference Library is, by and large, available for loan through local public libraries.

The key to future networks clearly lies in the effective use of new technologies. The State Libraries must become expert both in their use and in advising others how best to utilise them. New types of staff skills as well as investment in the technologies themselves are required. Libraries for the public have to utilise such technology on behalf of users who may have no understanding of their processes, unlike many research and special libraries which provide such skills and services to clients who have already substantial skill and experience in using new technology. Adequate recognition by funding authorities of the present and future implications of such developments and their ability to bring not only national but international resources to the door of local users, is still a long way off.

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Libraries increasingly utilise computing and communications technologies to provide information

There is still at least one major institution where bureaucratic perversity continues to obstruct the installation of telex equipment, not to mention the necessary terminal equipment to access machine-based information services. It is difficult to perceive such an institution becoming the centre of a State network as long as it is confined to the horse and buggy era.

THE STATE LIBRARY AND STATE PLANNING

Closely associated with the role of the State Library as a network centre, is the role of the State Library Authority as a planning body. Because the State Library is now in all states integrally part of the State Library Authority it must be closely associated with the development of state plans. These will be in the first instance devoted to the development of comprehensive library services for the public. However, the increasing emphasis on networks and concepts of resource sharing will lead to wider questions of state planning which recognise the resources held in other institutions, particularly tertiary and specialised libraries, and their relationship to the other resources in the state and particularly those of the State Library. Planning is often rejected because it is equated with control. It is the challenge faced by democratic society in developing library and information services for an information-based society of the future, to ensure that planning and co-ordination of resources does not become control, whether intellectual or political, of the information systems of the future.

The Horton Report had some reservations about the

> 'combined role of the State Library Authority as planner of the totality of the State's public library services, and controller of the State Library. These reservations stem from a fear that a conflict of interest could arise between the two roles, which might not be determined in the best interests of the community. The risk is not likely to be serious, however, provided that the members of the Authority are appointed on a widely representative basis and appreciate the differing roles.'
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> [Horton Report, paragraph 5.20]

More serious is the need for a national context within which state resources can be viewed and co-ordinated. Australia still lacks

national policies and plans against which state policies and programmes can be developed. The first tentative steps in this direction have already been noted but it remains to be seen whether the result will be a significant step forward or merely another bureaucratic device to avoid real action.

A STATEMENT OF NEEDS

The preceding survey of some of the roles of the State Library has already made passing reference to some of the needs for resources, staffing and finance. It is not possible on the basis of publicly available information to do more than indicate the general need for serious action on the part of our various state governments to improve funding and resources. In some states action is proceeding in some directions. In no state is the situation one for widespread satisfaction. If it were, the Australian Library Promotion Council would have selected another focus for its energies as it enters the 1980s. It is precisely because we believe the State Libraries to have become a neglected asset that we call to public notice the urgency for a serious and comprehensive examination of their needs if they are to not only responsibly care for their existing collections, but also to continue to provide the resources and develop the services that can only sensibly be provided through a state agency.

We cannot afford to put off this problem to some hoped for better time in the future. Our libraries are neither part of our cultural fringe nor our cultural 'cringe'. They are central to the needs of modern society. They must be given a priority in the allocation of resources equal to those for areas such as health and education. Their vitality is essential to the vitality of Australian society as it becomes increasingly dependent on access to information resources of all types.

PURCHASE OF MATERIALS

We have already referred (page 18) to the comments of New South Wales on the problems of maintaining collections with budgets which are under severe inflationary pressures. We have also drawn attention to the long term effects of budgetary cuts in South Australia at the time of the Depression. Similar comments can be made elsewhere. The book vote of the State Library of Tasmania

has not grown in recent years at a rate great enough to enable the development of collections. The rapid expansion of services referred to earlier has outstripped the funds available for collection building and has absorbed funds which might have been used to develop research collections.

Western Australia undoubtedly views as its greatest need the upgrading of State Reference Library and Circulation Division stock to international standards. In the case of both types of material, there is a need to increase the range of formats available, with emphasis being on their content, rather than the form of the medium. Information held in micro or video form has long since taken its place on the shelf alongside the book. There is an ever-increasing need for strengths to be developed in certain areas of the State Reference Library's collection. In the future, greater emphasis will be laid on establishing collections to meet special needs, and many such resources will be made available to local public libraries through the Circulation Division. To do the things seen to be necessary, the present level of financial support would need to double.

In areas of special materials we have already noted comments from Tasmania concerning inadequate funds for films and music. Similarly in New South Wales the high unit cost and steeply rising prices of films for the State Film Library is a matter of great concern and it is apparent that desirable initiatives such as the establishment of a State collection of recorded sound will be inhibited for an indefinite period. The necessary services to meet the needs of both ethnic groups and the print handicapped in our society will only be adequately developed if there is significant improvement in the resources allocated to such services.

Books are fundamental to a library. Our State Libraries must have adequate funds to maintain and develop their collections. Not only must we buy the essential output of today — including current journal subscriptions. We must continue to make good the deficiencies of the past before it becomes too late, and material ceases to be available. The increasing inability of other libraries to buy as widely as they have done in the past, will place increasing pressure on the resources of State Libraries. They must be recognised as a central and fundamental state level resource, and be funded on that basis.

STAFF RESOURCES

We have already referred to the problems faced by service type institutions in an inflationary economy, when staff costs begin to consume an increasing percentage of the available budget. Government action inevitably is to impose draconian measures to restrict the number of staff and reduce rather than develop the available resource. Unless an institution has been managed in the past in a grossly inefficient fashion, such measures can only be contrary to the public interest. Reducing staff resources either results in neglect behind the scenes of the obligations for proper care and maintenance of the collections, or the reduction of public services and thereby denial of access to the resources which is the reason for the institution's existence in the first place.

The view in New South Wales is instructive, reflecting as it does the problems not only of a very large and complex library but the difficulties of restraining costs and at the same time introducing new resources/services to meet developing community needs. Whilst funds are needed to maintain the collection it is clear that the provision of such additional funds for the acquisition of library materials will not, by itself, solve all problems. Without staff to handle the technical side of the acquisition and organisation of materials, and without staff to provide needed information services from the collections, money for resources alone would be wasted.

The sheer fact of the matter is that the staff of the State Library of New South Wales is stretched almost to breaking point. While some relief will be afforded by cataloguing automation in 1980, this will be in the context of a cataloguing backlog of huge proportions; and in the information services departments the use of computer-based information retrieval systems will not lighten the load appreciably, particularly in Australian studies and other non-technological areas.

The difficulties of coping with increased material resources without adequate staff are well illustrated in the case of the Foreign Language Lending Service. It is more than probable that alone among the current operations of the Library this collection of material in 26 languages, which supplements the resources of local public libraries serving ethnic groups in the community, might receive substantially increased government funds for resources, in line with a Ministerial undertaking to increase greatly the number

of foreign language books for community use: but the present staff cannot cope with more books, or more users, than they do now, and current staff ceilings preclude the allocation of more staff.

Similarly, the special needs of the handicapped, of enquirers into family history, and other special groups either not presently or at best poorly served cannot be met under existing staffing policies. While it is beyond question that in this present period of heavy constraints upon staff members priorities have to be allocated between existing services and desirable new initiatives, it is simply neither appropriate nor possible to discontinue too much of the old to enable the start of the new. This should be obvious but is too often overlooked.

Although the State Library of New South Wales is now attempting to do more than it ever has in its whole existence, in order to meet perceived community needs, it has not been provided with the staff necessary to support new activities, and there seems no likelihood that it will be. Indeed, the lesson of the late 1970s and the 1980s seems to be that library staffs will be maintained at the existing level or more probably cut, perhaps considerably. While there can be salutary short-term effect in re-assessing priorities, in the long run staff cuts too drastic have an effect both on service and on the morale of the staff. No great change is seen to be likely, however, and activities will be determined to some extent by the staff available for them.

ACCOMMODATION

The first impression the public gains of its State Library is inevitably strongly influenced by the nature of its accommodation. As we have seen, two State Libraries have relatively modern buildings, one has a building in the course of construction and another plans to design and construct its building by 1984. The two largest and oldest occupy buildings conceived, if not constructed, at the beginning of the present century, and although Victoria is in active planning for a new building it will have to survive the constraints of its present accommodation for some years yet.

The achievement of the new buildings presently under or planned for construction in Perth and Brisbane will undoubtedly have

enormous impact on the public image of the institutions which will occupy them. It is essential therefore that these institutions have adequate resources in terms of staff and collections to meet community expectations for service. There can be no greater waste of public money than to build monumental edifices and then fail to provide the essential resources to make them function.

It is salutary to remember also that buildings must be planned for the future as well as the present. Not only do new services and new technologies have to be considered but also the sheer physical growth of the institution. Already the relatively modern buildings in Adelaide and Hobart are suffering from accommodation pressures and further buildings are required.

As we have already noted Victoria has begun work on a new building project although as yet nothing has reached the drawing board. In New South Wales there is a designated site for a new and additional State Library building but so far no government commitment to proceed with construction by a designated date. The problems which beset an old institution are well exemplified by the present state of the Macquarie Street building in Sydney.

The first stage dates from 1910 and the fourth and final wing was completed in 1964. No part of the building, except perhaps the bookstack storage areas, is particularly suitable for present day needs. There are, for instance, no public spaces for using typewriters or tape recorders, nor can audio-visual information sources be conveniently used. The reading room of the Mitchell Library is too small and that of the General Reference Library too large but different conditions of access and use make it impracticable to rationalise the reading room areas. The Acquisitions Department occupies what was intended (and once used) as the Rare Books exhibition and reading area, and the Cataloguing Department is conveniently split between two rooms. The Manuscripts Cataloguing Section, the Maps Section, the Public Libraries Division and other minor sections including almost all accounting and other clerical functions are in an office building some distance away. The State Film Library is in another office building even further removed, while the Adult Education Library is in a suburban factory some miles away. Such dispersal of functions and operations does not make for easy, economical or satisfactory provision of service.

CONSERVATION

A final need of a different nature but of equal importance is concerned with the physical conservation of the collections of our State Libraries. We have already referred to the problem in relation to the archival resources of the state. It applies equally, but on a larger scale, to the printed collections held in the research libraries of this country. The bulk of this resource was printed after the development of large scale printing, which in turn required the development of machine made papers using more economical stock than the early handmade rag based papers. Consequently most books printed since the mid-19th century, and that means the majority of our collections, sit quietly deteriorating on the library shelves. Modern buildings with controlled air conditioned climates assist only in slowing down the process. Although substantial research has been carried out overseas we have yet to see the development of mass deacidification[4] programmes to deal with this problem. Australia however contributes nothing to the solution of the problem and is not even developing minimal staff skills in this area.

The Horton Report said this of the Australian material in the Mitchell and Dixson Libraries — the physical condition of much of the research material can only be described as deplorable, and an urgent and comprehensive restoration programme should be implemented immediately. This is demonstrably beyond the present or probable future financial resources which the State Government is able to provide for the State Library. A recent estimate has shown almost 300,000 volumes in the whole of the State Library's collections require repair of some kind, and almost as many require rebinding, while nearly every one of the more than 600,000 pictorial items requires some form of restoration or at least preventative treatment.

In Queensland the volume of conservation and restoration work

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4 Mass deacidification.
Much research has been carried out on the problems of paper conservation and laboratory methods tested. The large scale of the problem however requires production line methods which will enable mass treatment of affected material. Because of the wide range of chemical properties of papers and bindings, a satisfactory mass-production method has yet to be developed.

Repairing the ravages of time requires skill and patience

exclusively for State Library materials has been described as 'rather frightening'. Funds and facilities are in fact required in every state to first preserve unique material and secondly as far as possible extend the life of the general collections. They represent a massive investment by the Australian community.

This investment has been built by past generations. It has laid a foundation for the present and the future which we must recognise and build upon. To sit back idly watching it dwindle and decay and the institutions becoming less and less effective will earn us little credit from future generations. Short term economic problems are no excuse for avoiding long term responsibilities. These responsibilities are yours as a member of the public. Exert your influence wherever you can to ensure that your State Library receives adequate support to do the job for which it was established and which is still as relevant and necessary today.